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RELATIONS ON THE NEW ZONING STANDARDS

R-3

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DEPARTMENT OF
CITY PLANNING

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REPORT ON THE R-3 ZONING STANDARDS

OCTOBER 1963

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SUMMARY

This report is submitted in response to widespread public concern over the standards for R-3 zoning districts contained in the 1960 City Planning Code. It describes the inadequacies of these standards as found by a Department of City Planning study, and recommends specific improvements in the R-3 standards.

The R-3 Districts are designed for low-rise apartment buildings -- buildings having two or three floors of apartments over a parking level -- which are the predominant form of new housing construction in San Francisco today. Factors within the building industry are stimulating rapid and intensive development in R-3 areas, and therefore the R-3 provisions are more important to current residential development in the City than any other part of the City Planning Code.

R-3 zoning covers the areas throughout the City that are designated by the Master Plan for medium density housing. These areas have usually been characterized by one-, two- and three-family dwellings of moderate size, with adequate indoor and outdoor space for family living.

In its original recommendations for R-3 Districts, the City Planning Commission proposed standards that would have permitted a gradually more intensive development of these neighborhoods without radical or abrupt disruption of their existing character. The R-3 standards finally adopted as part of the 1960 City Planning Code, however, permit an intensity of development twice that originally proposed, and at least two or three times that presently existing in these neighborhoods.

The impact of such liberal R-3 standards has now been felt, and neighborhood residents have expressed alarm at the large size of the new buildings and their overpowering effect on surrounding properties.

The study by the Department of City Planning, begun in 1961 at the direction of the City Planning Commission, has evaluated apartment buildings built under the existing R-3 standards. This study has shown that close to half the new dwelling units recently built have been located in the many R-3 areas of the City. The more recent R-3 buildings have tended to increase in size and to push closer to the permitted density limit of 400 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit.

It has been found that the existing R-3 density standard has not been an effective guide to development, but rather that it most often represents the maximum density that can physically be achieved under the Building Code height limit of 40 feet for wood frame construction, once the required parking spaces and other building needs are provided for.

When the density is this high in a low-rise building, individual dwelling units are small (rarely exceeding two bedrooms and predominantly having only one bedroom), and some units face only on a small light court, as narrow as five or six feet, at the center of the building. Rear yards are completely paved for parking, and frequently one parking space is blocked by another parked automobile, as presently permitted by the City Planning Code. Landscaping and outdoor areas for recreation are almost never to be found.

A survey of other major cities of the United States shows that, among comparable apartment districts, the R-3 standards are unique in their permissiveness.

Because of these inadequacies found in existing R-3 standards, the Department of City Planning carried its study further to formulate new standards that would ensure the construction of medium density housing geared to the long-range needs of the City. The major recommendations are as follows:

1. A reduction of permitted density through a requirement of 800 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit in R-3 rather than 400.
2. A requirement that 200 square feet of usable open space be provided for each dwelling unit.
3. A ban on rear yard parking and on blocked parking spaces.
4. A requirement that one room of each dwelling unit face a street, a rear yard, or some equivalent open space.
5. A new intermediate low-rise apartment district, R-3.5, with a density limit of 600 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, which would later be applied to certain areas presently zoned R-3 where a somewhat higher density is appropriate and accommodations for small households are needed.

A. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1. This report responds to a definite need expressed by the citizens of San Francisco.

This report is submitted in compliance with Resolution No. 5406 of the City Planning Commission, adopted June 30, 1961, which instructed the Department of City Planning "to make a detailed study and analysis of the experience and application of the standards in the City Planning Code for . . . R-3 Districts" and to submit any recommendations it had for modification of these standards.

The Planning Commission took this action after hearing expressions of widespread public concern as to broad inadequacies of the R-3 standards. Although the 1960 City Planning Code was then only one year old, neighborhood groups and individual citizens were already criticizing the Code as incapable of protecting certain values that make San Francisco the special kind of city that it is.

2. The City, at this point in time, has reached an important stage in its development, and must consider what form it will take in the future.

San Francisco can become yet a better city, but it has reached a crucial point in its development. It is now almost completely built-up, and future development will occur through filling of scattered vacant lots and through replacement of existing buildings. What is to happen to the physical and social form of the City at this juncture? San Francisco now has as much to offer its residents as any other city in the world; it also has a great deal to lose through lack of foresight and legislated planning control.

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF R-3 APARTMENT CONSTRUCTION

3. All new construction is important, but none is so important now to San Francisco as low-rise apartment buildings.

About half the developed land area in San Francisco is devoted to housing, a common proportion for a city of its size. Currently about one-third of the dwelling units in the City are single-family houses, one-third are apartments in buildings of ten units or more, and the remaining third are evenly split among two-family, three- to four-family, and five- to nine-family buildings.

Construction of housing units in the City has grown rapidly in recent years, and apartments are becoming more and more the dominant form of new construction, as shown in Table I.

TABLE I:

DWELLING UNITS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS
AS A PROPORTION OF ALL DWELLING UNITS FOR
WHICH BUILDING PERMITS WERE APPROVED, 1950-1962

YEAR	BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED	TOTAL DWELLING UNITS	DWELLING UNITS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS (3 UNITS OR MORE)	DWELLING UNITS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS AS PER CENT OF TOTAL
1950	2482	3508	976	28
1951	1363	1680	325	19
1952	1024	1185	153	13
1953	930	1330	401	30
1954	1184	2361	1226	52
1955	1229	1955	767	39
1956	916	1248	347	28
1957	858	1372	547	40
1958	1050	2117	1123	53
1959	1019	2664	1831	69
1960	921	3201	2442	76
1961	863	2883	2183	76
1962	1213	5179	4182	81

Source: Bureau of Building Inspection Reports

This preponderance of apartments in new construction is to be expected in San Francisco, where almost all vacant land for new single-family subdivisions has been used up, but the same trend holds throughout the Bay Area and the State of California, where half of new housing construction is in apartments, and the experience has been the same throughout the country.

The apartment boom in San Francisco reached its greatest proportions after the new City Planning Code became effective in 1960. In the three years 1960-1962, building permits were issued for more apartment units than in the preceding ten years. Thus far in 1963, the rate of construction has been close to that of the record year 1962. Among the new apartment buildings in the City, the predominant form is the low-rise building, usually of wood frame construction and consisting of two or three stories of dwelling units over a ground level devoted to parking. In 1962, this type of building accounted for 92 per cent of new apartment buildings and over half the apartment dwelling units approved under the City Planning Code.

Of all the buildings being built, therefore, low-rise apartments have by far the most widespread significance for the future development of residential areas in San Francisco. The standards in the City Planning Code, as they relate to such apartments, influence not only what may be built upon a particular site, but also the shape that the City as a whole will take in the future. They are helping to determine the total housing supply and its variety, what types of residents will be accommodated, what types of neighborhoods there will be, and what place San Francisco will occupy in the Bay Area. Decisions as to City Planning Code standards, in so far as they affect the number and family composition of residents in the future, are also related to the provision of public facilities such as parks and schools, the network of transportation facilities, and programs of neighborhood conservation and urban renewal. It is important, furthermore, to consider the many broad side effects of these City Planning Code decisions: for instance, new buildings that themselves add to the tax base may depreciate surrounding properties and lead to costly future slums; in addition, because housing is a long-term asset, units that today are intended for one- and two-person occupancy may later be occupied by larger families. A major element of successful planning is a sense of history - - anticipation of, and concern for, the form the city will take in 10, 20, and even 50 years.

4. Those concerned in the building of low-rise apartments - - the builders, the lending institutions and the purchasers - - have not shown a long-term interest in these buildings or in their effect on the future of the City.

The building of wood frame low-rise apartments in San Francisco is a specialized business. It is done mainly by a small group of builders, most of whom do not attempt the more expensive and complex high-rise construction. The business has the advantages of a short construction period per building and a great deal of standardization. Very little capital is put up by the builder, and he generally sells the building at the completion of construction in order to derive an immediate "builder's profit" rather than the longer range profit of investment in income property. In his scheme of operations, everything points toward building fast and getting on to the next project.

Many costs in this business can generally be closely predicted. Services such as design and financing are a small proportion and vary only a little. Site preparation costs depend upon slope and other site factors, but these can be calculated. Construction costs are held in line by standardization and use of economical materials. The most variable factor is land cost, which often is as much as 20 or 25 per cent of total costs and can exceed \$3000 per dwelling unit.

High land costs are indeed a problem for the community. It has been estimated that half the recent increase in housing costs in California has been due to increases in the price of land. In San Francisco, builders of low-rise apartments seek scattered vacant lots, view lots, lots containing cottages and other older buildings that are easily demolished, and corner lots where permitted building coverage is higher and design problems are minimized. At the same time, the sellers of these lots know their advantages and set the highest possible prices: a lot sold as a future building site, whether or not it already contains a building, is sold primarily as land, and the price asked is closely related to the number of dwelling units that will be permitted on the site by the City Planning Code.

There is some indication that the 1960 City Planning Code, in establishing for the first time definite, but very liberal dwelling unit limits, actually contributed to the rise in land prices by setting a precise figure to be used by the sellers: It has been stated by

competent authorities that liberal density standards are frequently more of a boon to the seller of land than to the buyer.*

Builders of R-3 buildings, in order to maintain uninterrupted construction activity, try to buy lots well in advance of construction, and compete with one another for sites. They are therefore forced in most cases to meet the seller's asking price, which is based on the maximum number of units that can be built. The builder then feels compelled to construct the number of units reflected in the land cost, in order to guarantee the short-term profit that makes the transaction worth while for him.

The criteria by which a project is deemed economically feasible by a builder will vary a great deal from case to case and from builder to builder. Because land prices and differing methods of operations prevent easy generalization, the most that can be said is that a builder will not undertake a project unless he believes he can cover his costs and realize an appreciable profit besides.

One of the most favorable factors recently influencing the apartment boom nationwide has been a plentiful supply of capital from lending institutions. In California, savings and loan associations have rapidly increasing assets, and the commercial banks, after raising their interest rates to attract larger savings deposits, are attempting to recapture some of the mortgage market that they have lost. In this atmosphere, there is a tendency for some institutions to be less concerned about balance in their investment portfolios, normal appraising techniques, or the probable economic value of completed buildings. Loans for apartments are favored, because of their larger size, their higher yield, and their lower servicing costs. Rental housing, therefore, can attract capital that is unavailable to the home buyer. Most of the loans follow "conventional" methods rather than using the more favorable terms of FHA-Insured mortgaging, because of the closer control on operations imposed by the FHA, and, in San Francisco, the failure of most low-rise buildings to come close to FHA design standards.

* This viewpoint was brought out, for instance, by builders at a national conference on apartment housing. House and Home, Oct. 1959.

Construction is also aided by the prevailing Federal income tax structure. For a new apartment building, the owner (whether he be the builder, or, most commonly in San Francisco, a buyer who is either an individual or a company specializing in operating rental properties) can look forward to six, seven, or even 10 years of high return on his investment. Using the "double-declining balance" method of depreciation, he will be able to depreciate for tax purposes nearly one-half the cost of the building in seven years, with the result that, during this period, the amounts allowed as depreciation are likely to equal his rental income after operating expenses, and thus this rental income comes to him tax-free. After about seven years, when a major part of the building's value has been depreciated for tax purposes, he will commonly sell the building and pay a tax at the low capital gains rate. The new owner will be permitted to depreciate the building again, starting from the sale price that he paid.

In this total scheme of things, the builder is interested in turning out a product that will be economical and marketable, and subsequent owners are interested in high rents and low current maintenance costs. The economics of the situation encourage an emphasis on immediate profits, with little concern for the long-term usefulness or condition of the building.

Thus far the rental market for apartments has been good in San Francisco, where there is a high demand for new units for one- and two-person occupancy. Rents of at least \$130 for one bedroom and \$160 for two bedrooms can be charged, and this is the market toward which most of the new construction is directed. There has been some break in this market in other cities around the country and elsewhere in California, particularly in Los Angeles, San Jose and parts of the East Bay, where high vacancy rates have prevailed, although the rate of new construction has not abated to any great degree in those areas. Where the market has thus become saturated, apartments with fewer amenities for their tenants are usually the slowest to rent.

From all of these facts concerning economics, it is apparent that very few guidelines for the builder are laid down by buyers and lending agencies, and even the tenants may have little influence except in a saturated market. In this situation, the role of the City Planning Code is all the more significant.

5. The main areas designated for low-rise apartments are the R-3 Districts, and these are widespread.

The City Planning Code establishes the R-3 Districts as the principal areas for low-rise apartment buildings, although similar buildings can also be constructed in the R-4 and R-5 (high-rise apartment) Districts and in any of the Commercial Districts. R-3 zoning is found in most sections of the City, and it predominates in the Marina, Richmond, Western Addition, Mission, Potrero-Bernal and Buena Vista-Twin Peaks areas. R-3 zoning occupies over 2,500 acres (about four square miles) of net land area (exclusive of streets), which is more than the R-4 and R-5 Districts and the R-2 (two-family) Districts combined. Frequently, R-3 areas are adjacent to and intermixed with areas of lower density, particularly those zoned R-2. The standards applied to R-3 Districts, therefore, affect many neighborhoods and a major share of the existing housing supply. (See Plate 1)

AREAS OF SAN FRANCISCO NOW ZONED R-3

MAJOR COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL
AND PUBLIC AREAS

R-3 DISTRICTS

Total for city = 2,535 acres
23% of residentially-zoned land.



PRESENT CITY PLANNING CODE STANDARDS FOR R-3 DISTRICTS

- Max. Density: 400 sq. ft. of lot area per dwelling unit
- Max. Coverage: 70% (Corner lots 75%)
- Min. Rear Yard: 25 ft. (Corner lots 15 ft.)
- Max. Height: 40 ft.
- Min. Parking: One space per dwelling unit
(One space per building may be blocked)

PLATE I

C. R-3 AND THE MASTER PLAN

6. City Planning Code standards for R-3 areas are meant to follow the Master Plan for San Francisco, but they are now far more liberal than those called for by the Master Plan.

The important underlying basis of the City Planning Code is the Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco, first adopted in 1945 and periodically modified after public hearings. This Master Plan as it now stands is felt to be close to the desires of the neighborhood residents and the overall community as to the character of these neighborhoods and the character of the total supply of housing in San Francisco. The formulation of the original Master Plan made clear the inadequacies of the 1921 City Planning Code, which had virtually no standards for residential construction except in single-family districts, and eventually led to the adoption of the 1960 City Planning Code. But although the new residential standards recommended by the City Planning Commission at an early stage in the drafting of the new Code were in line with the Master Plan, the standards finally made into law were not.

The Nature of the Master Plan. The responsibility of the City Planning Commission for preparation of the Master Plan derives from Section 116 of the Charter, which describes the Master Plan as "a comprehensive, long-term, general plan for the improvement and future development of the city and county". The Land Use Section of the Master Plan, as described by the Charter, is to include a proposed general distribution of the various categories of land uses, and "recommended standards of population density and building intensity, with estimates of population growth".

The Master Plan, in its Land Use Section, sets maximum average densities of 55 persons per acre for low density residential areas, 110 persons per acre for medium density areas, and 220 persons per acre for high density areas, and it indicates the location of such areas throughout the City. (In the City Planning Code, R-1-D, R-1 and R-2 should conform to the low density range, R-3 to the medium density range, and R-4 and R-5 to the high density range, although the R-3, R-4 and R-5 standards now far exceed those of the Master Plan.) The Master Plan densities are based upon a variety of factors, chief of which are the existing densities throughout the City, the projected population holding capacity (maximum efficient residential population) of the City, concepts of maximum densities at which good housing can be provided in various types of buildings, the ability of the City to provide needed public facilities, and the role of the City in the Bay Area.

On the basis of its density figures, the Master Plan establishes a population holding capacity for the City at slightly over 900,000 persons. This would represent an increase of 160,000 persons over the 1960 population, which stood at 740,000 or 82 per cent of the holding capacity. Total population in the City actually has decreased slightly in recent years, and most estimates predict a quite stable total population size for at least the next 10 or 20 years.

The Master Plan standards are also compatible with actual existing densities, neighborhood by neighborhood. Whereas the Master Plan contemplates a density of 110 persons per acre in medium density areas, the 1960 Census shows these areas to have densities in the ranges of 25-50, 70-100 and (predominantly) 50-70 persons per acre. For all residential areas of the City, contained in 54 community planning areas, only three (North Beach, Haight-Ashbury and South Excelsior) exceeded their Master Plan holding capacities in 1960, and one-third of the 54 areas had less than 75 per cent of their holding capacities. The Master Plan density standards are thus a realistic guide to future growth within a framework that preserves the general character of San Francisco's residential neighborhoods.

Policies Behind the Master Plan. The goals of the Master Plan are firmly supported by city planning policy. Meaningful control of residential densities has long been recognized as a principal purpose of zoning, in order to assure light, air, privacy and open space, minimize noise, dirt and air pollution, assure safety in the streets and from fire and other disasters, and promote mental and physical health. Density control tends to temper unrealistic land prices and to prevent overbuilding on individual sites which can drain adjacent land values and threaten the tax base. It also permits prediction of growth and a sensible programming of utilities, transit, and capital improvements such as streets, parks and schools.

An essential aspect of a major city is its concentration and compactness. Life has many advantages in an intense urban atmosphere. But at a certain point many people begin to abhor high density, and for this reason attention must be given to a housing policy related to the needs of the city's own people and to the place of the city in the region. This policy has two main concerns: first, to retain some residents who might move out, and second, to make the city livable for residents without the where-withal or the desire to move out. The need for a definite policy of this sort has been recognized more and more in San Francisco in recent months and is reflected among the goals and objectives of the Community Renewal Program study now under way.

San Francisco is beginning to be overtaken by problems that thus far have become acute only in Eastern cities. The City wants diversity: single persons, families, professional people, employers, skilled employees, and a fair share of the rapidly expanding white-collar population. It wants people of all races, and above all people who are articulate and are aware of what must be done to retain the vitality of the City.

At the same time the suburbs are competing for many of these same people, offering lower density living, open space, single-family houses for purchase and more spacious apartments for rental. In 1962, nine-tenths of the apartments built in the Bay Area were outside San Francisco.

The type of population developing in San Francisco is shown clearly by 1960 Census figures. Total population was down from 1950, as was the number of families with children, but the number of housing units was up substantially. Average occupancy of a housing unit (including all types of accommodations from single-family houses to rooming units) was 2.0 persons. One-person occupancy rose to 34 per cent of all housing units,

two-person occupancy held steady at 30 per cent, and larger households, with the exception of the largest families, declined. The median age of all persons rose to 37.3 years. The mobility of residents was demonstrated by the low owner-occupancy rate of 35 per cent and the fact that only 45 per cent of those living in San Francisco in 1960 lived in the same house in 1955. Median family income, though it rose from 1950, was down in relation to the total Bay Area, with much of this decline attributable to an increase in the number of minority families in the City.

The Role of R-3. Facts such as these have an important bearing upon the Master Plan for San Francisco. Nothing will help more to stabilize the population of the City than encouragement of greater diversity and amenity in its medium density housing supply. That is the purpose of the medium density residential land use classification of the Master Plan, and it was intended to be the purpose of the R-3 zoning district as derived from the Master Plan. R-3 was originally designed, under the City Planning Commission recommendations, as a district of mixed housing types with ample open space, to accommodate a variety of occupancy including families with children, older couples returning from the suburbs who are accustomed to outdoor space, older single persons and couples continuing to live in a home they have had for years, young married persons, and some single persons of all ages who wish to rent in a quiet medium density neighborhood. The City Planning Commission proposed R-3 standards in line with these objectives, and proposed that the R-3 District be mapped for large sections of the City where a residential area of this type was contemplated.

The 1960 City Planning Code went through seven published drafts during the years 1948 to 1958. The standards for R-3 fluctuated widely, starting with the City Planning Commission recommendation of a density factor* of 800 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, which would have resulted in an average density close to the Master Plan limit of 110 persons per acre, and ending with adoption of a density factor of 400 square feet per dwelling unit. This doubling of the recommended density

* The "density factor", expressed as a required minimum number of square feet of lot area per dwelling unit on the lot, determines the maximum density allowed. The lower the "density factor", the higher will be the resulting density of dwelling units on the lot and in the neighborhood.

was accompanied by a steady rise in the maximum building coverage to be permitted, which was eventually set at 75 per cent of the lot for corner lots and 70 per cent for interior (non-corner) lots. There was no requirement for outdoor living areas or landscaping, nor were any minimum standards set for light courts on which apartments faced at the center of the building. One parking space for each dwelling unit was required, but parking could occupy all of the required rear yard, and one parking space for each building could be arranged in tandem and thus be blocked by another parked automobile.

One of the ironies of the resulting situation is that the express purposes of the City Planning Code itself seem to be contradicted by the R-3 standards. Section 101 of the Code reads as follows:

SEC. 101. Purposes. This City Planning Code is adopted to promote and protect the public health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, convenience and general welfare, and for the following more particularly specified purposes:

- (a) To guide, control and regulate future growth and development in accordance with the Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco;
- (b) To protect the character and the stability of residential, commercial and industrial areas within the City, and to promote the orderly and beneficial development of such areas;
- (c) To provide adequate light, air, privacy and convenience of access to property, and to secure safety from fire and other dangers;
- (d) To prevent overcrowding the land and undue congestion of population;
- (e) To regulate the location of buildings and the use of buildings and land adjacent to streets and thoroughfares, in such manner as to obviate the danger to public safety caused by undue interference with existing or prospective traffic movements on such streets and thoroughfares.

A further contrast can be seen in Section 104 of the Code, which contains an obsolete description of R-3 as a "low density multiple residential district".

Standards with similar permissiveness were adopted for other residential districts but none of these wholesale changes in the regulations were accompanied by a reshaping of the zoning map, which had been based upon earlier, well thought-out concepts of the functions of the various

districts. The revised standards and the map were made effective in 1960, providing for a total City population of 1,800,000, double the Master Plan holding capacity, and a development potential of from two to three times current density in most multi-family neighborhoods.

The problems produced by the new City Planning Code were most acute in R-3 areas, where an increase in density would be most sharply felt. Given the change in R-3 standards before adoption, the City could have re-examined the R-3 areas and attempted a partial solution by changing many blocks to R-2 where one- and two-family houses predominated, widening streets and building community parking, acquiring more land for parks, and replanning transit, schools and other public facilities. But changing whole neighborhoods from R-3 to R-2, eliminating all opportunity for future medium density development in three- and four-family houses, was not an acceptable solution. Neither was a major reshaping of the City's physical facilities. Furthermore, the need to institute some sort of zoning density control in the City was becoming more pressing year by year, and continued delay was inadvisable. The alternative was to put the more liberal R-3 standards into effect and give them a reasonable period to prove their own inappropriateness.

7. Objections to R-3 zoning, repeatedly raised by neighborhood groups, have had a great deal of substance and an import for the entire City.

Studies by the Department of City Planning of typical blocks in R-3 neighborhoods indicate a predominance of existing buildings with from one to three dwelling units, low coverage, and ample open space. There is a mixture of dwelling unit sizes, with most units having at least two bedrooms. In the R-3 areas are found residents of all ages, and many races, incomes and types and places of work. Some of these residents, particularly the families with children, cannot easily find the types of housing they need within San Francisco, and their situation has been made worse when new R-3 buildings have dominated the block. These new buildings, looming much larger and catering to a different family composition, have tended to make the existing buildings less desirable for their present occupancy and marketable mainly as sites for new buildings, hastening the change in the character of the block.



That the R-3 standards permit a rather drastic increase in residential density is easily seen. Table II compares existing densities and numbers of dwelling units with those that would be reached if certain neighborhoods were fully developed to the R-3 standards.

TABLE II :
COMPARISON, FOR SELECTED NEIGHBORHOODS,
OF NUMBER OF EXISTING DWELLING UNITS
WITH NUMBER POSSIBLE UNDER PRESENT R-3 STANDARDS

PLANNING AREA	AREAS ZONED R-3 (IN ACRES)	EXISTING NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS IN R-3 AREAS, 1962	EXISTING DENSITY IN R-3 AREAS (DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE), 1962	POSSIBLE NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS (AT R-3 DENSITY OF 108.9 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)
Golden Gate (#1.2)	100.43	3,108	31.0	10,937
Marina-Cow Hollow (#3.1)	92.46	4,271	46.2	10,069
Noe Valley (#7.3)	94.33	2,868	30.4	10,273
Upper Noe (#7.4)	114.49	2,898	25.3	12,468
Potrero Hill (#8.2)	204.35	3,927	19.2	22,254
Ocean Beach (#12.1)	28.67	749	26.1	3,122

Source: Department of City Planning Surveys

As the R-3 buildings have gone up, serious objections have been raised in many neighborhoods. Residents of these neighborhoods have called into question the bulk of the new buildings, pointing out that they are often taller than existing houses, encroach on prevailing front setbacks, and extend twice as deep on their lots. These residents have cited increased traffic, increased demand for curb parking, and removal of existing curb spaces by new driveways. They have protested the premature demolition of good existing buildings for replacement with buildings often less substantial in appearance, the substitution of open parking for landscaped back yard areas, and lack of proper maintenance practices. And they have also called attention to the new patterns of adult occupancy in these buildings. These protesting residents believe that permanent damage is being done to their neighborhoods and to their property values.

Public criticism of the R-3 standards has reached its fullest extent in petitions for zoning reclassification brought by property owners living near the sites of new R-3 buildings. One such petition, in 1961, gave rise to the study that is the subject of this report, and another petition produced a long series of hearings in the spring of 1963. Groups elsewhere in the City have indicated they would seek reclassification of their areas from R-3 to R-2 or R-1 if no improvement is made in the R-3 standards. In the petitions before it, the City Planning Commission determined that a zoning reclassification should not be granted in the absence of a full-scale study of the R-3 standards throughout the City. It is the belief of the Commission that construction cannot be regulated, and the R-3 problem cannot be solved, on a case-by-case basis, but that a broader answer must be sought.



D. EVALUATION OF EXISTING R-3 STANDARDS

8. Against all of this background, the Department of City Planning has conducted an intensive study of the R-3 standards.

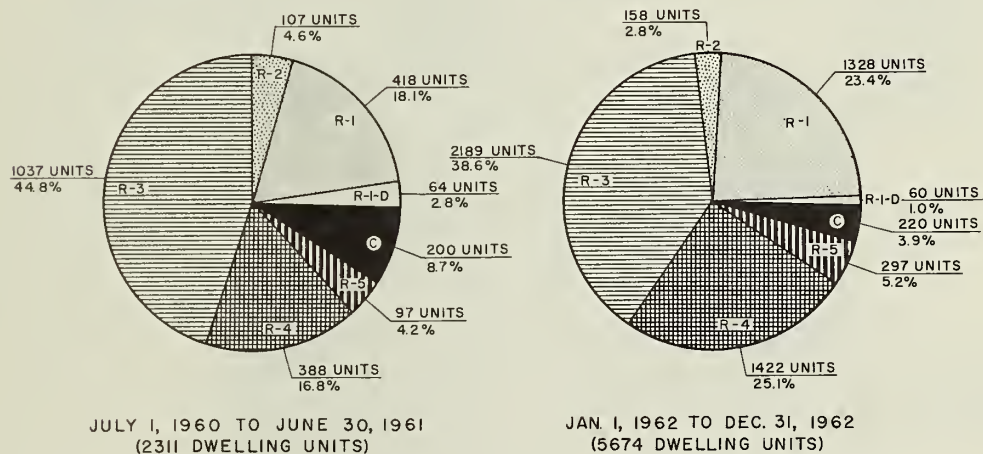
With the foregoing facts in mind, the Department of City Planning conducted an intensive study of construction plans that have been approved under the R-3 regulations. Two one-year periods were chosen, covering the first fiscal year of the new City Planning Code (July 1, 1960 through June 30, 1961), and the last full year for which information was readily available (the calendar year 1962). The study therefore covered about two-thirds of the time since the R-3 standards went into effect. For the two periods chosen, information for each building was collected, and representative buildings were evaluated in terms of their livability and their relationship to surrounding properties, in order to determine needed revisions in the R-3 standards.

For the first period, the Department of City Planning approved permit applications for 160 new buildings, containing 1037 dwelling units, that came under the R-3 standards, and for the second period there were 237 such new buildings with 2189 dwelling units. (Nearly all these buildings were in R-3 Districts, but there was a scattering of buildings on "R-2 Transitional" lots, adjacent to Commercial Districts, which were also subject to the R-3 standards, and such buildings were considered to be in R-3 Districts for purposes of computation.)

9. This study has shown even more clearly the crucial significance of R-3 zoning.

One important fact shown by these surveys was the high proportion of all new housing construction that has been taking place in R-3 Districts. During the first period 44.8 per cent of all new dwelling units in the City approved by the Department of City Planning were in R-3, and during the second period the figure was 38.6 per cent. (See Plate 2. After excluding buildings subject to special standards in re-development projects and Planned Unit Developments, the figures for R-3 dwelling units for both periods are approximately 50 per cent.)

LOCATION, BY ZONING DISTRICT, OF NEW DWELLING UNITS APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING



Note: Dwelling units on transitional lots are included in the governing district.

PLATE 2

A second significant point is that new R-3 buildings have been built in all neighborhoods zoned for them, although some areas have received greater concentrations than others. (See Plate 3)

LOCATION OF R-3 BUILDINGS APPROVED BY DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

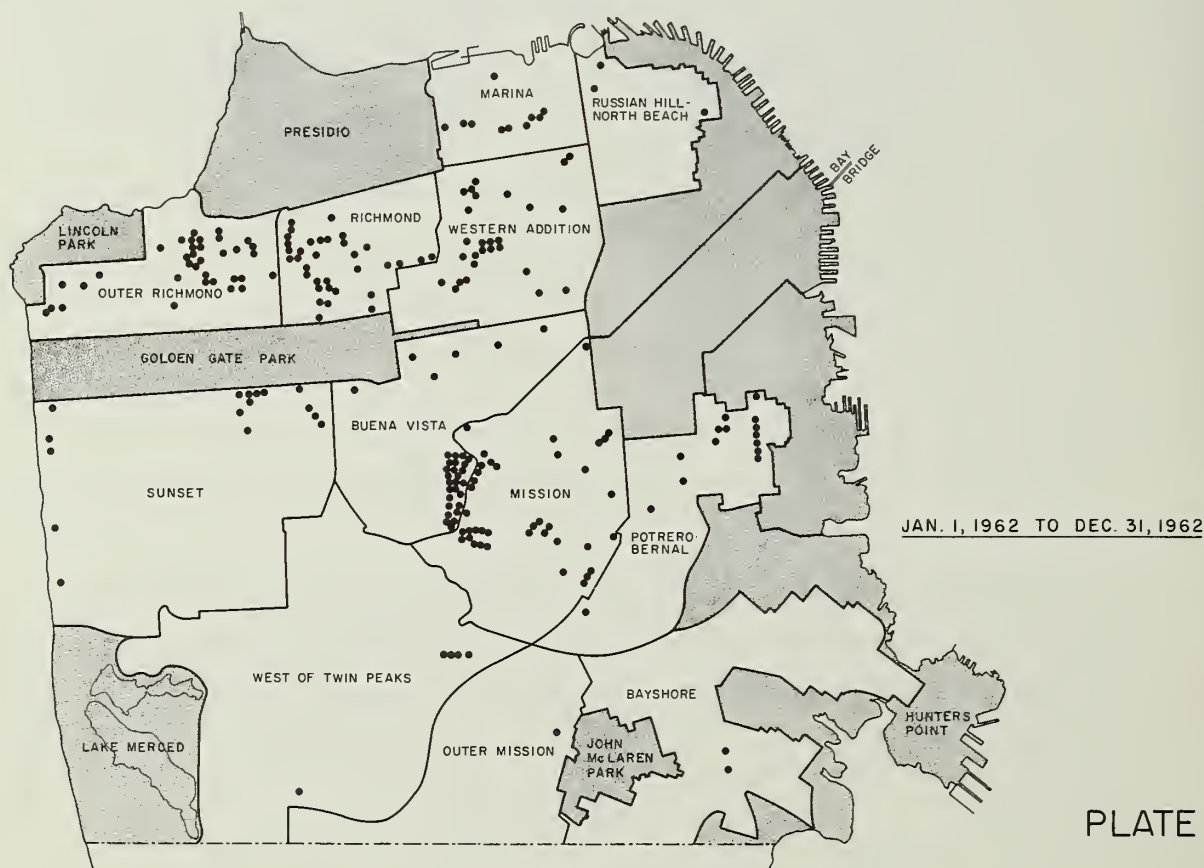
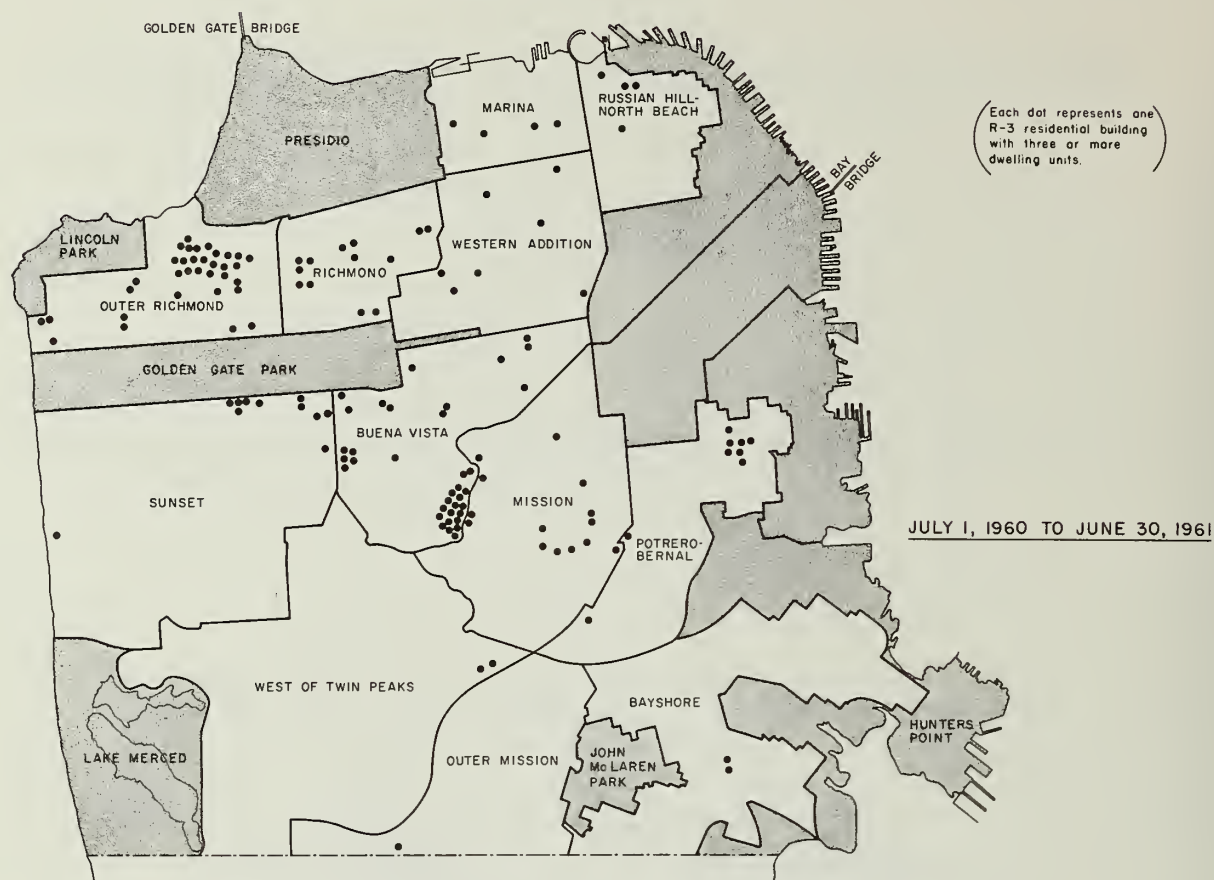


PLATE 3

As shown in Plate 4, R-3 buildings in both periods varied greatly as to the number of dwelling units they contained, but there was a concentration of buildings at certain size intervals closely related to the size of the lots on which they were placed, and during the second period there was a tendency toward larger buildings.

SIZE, BY NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS, OF R-3 BUILDINGS
APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

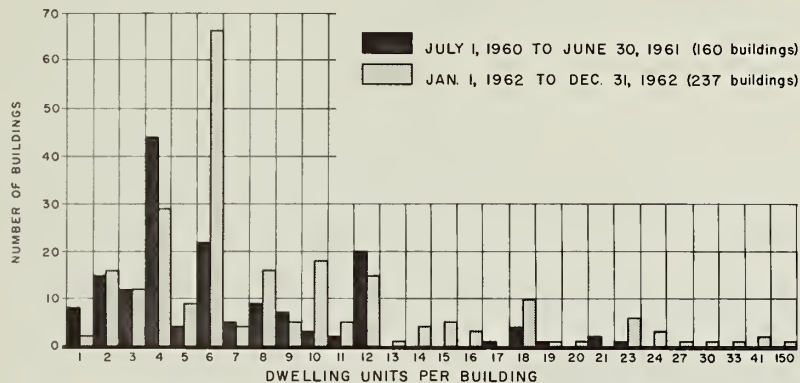
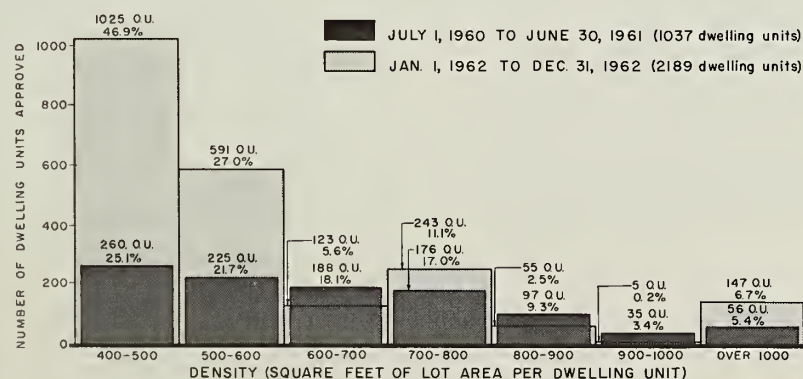


PLATE 4

Probably the most significant difference between the two periods of study was the fact that during the second, builders generally managed to push closer to the primary standard of the City Planning Code, the permitted density limit of 400 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit. Plate 5 compares the amounts of construction at various density levels, with the higher densities appearing at the left side of the graph. The same statement as to closeness to permitted limits in the second period holds true for other standards as well, especially lot coverage.

DENSITY OF DWELLING UNITS FOR R-3 BUILDINGS
APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING



NOTE: One and two family dwellings included in addition to multiple dwellings

PLATE 5

10. The existing regulations for R-3 have been found inadequate in a variety of ways.

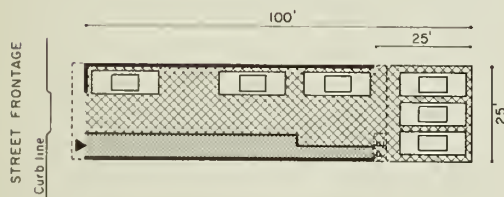
The fact that the maximum density permitted by the City Planning Code is frequently not quite reached is a symptom of the most basic inadequacy of R-3, which is in the density standard itself.

The lesser density achieved does not appear to be due to the builder's desire to build at less than the maximum, nor is it definitely related to the size or slope of the lot or its view, to the existing neighborhood patterns, to the number of stories in the building, or to the width of the street or the proximity of community facilities.

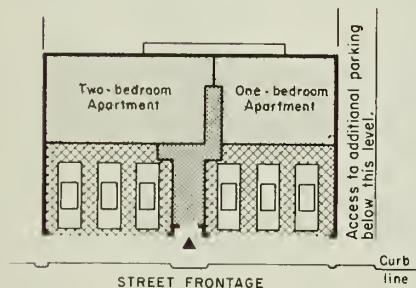
The answer, rather, is that a density limit of 400 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, with two or three floors of residential occupancy, is hardly a control at all, but allows virtually the largest number of units that can be fitted on a lot under ideal conditions for the builder. When buildings of only two or three floors of occupancy are constructed in R-4 or R-5 or in a Commercial District, where a higher density is permitted by the City Planning Code than in R-3, the builder will usually be physically unable to exceed the R-3 density standard, and almost never will surpass it by more than 10 per cent. Under the present R-3 standards, factors other than the density limit are likely to determine how many units will be built.

Required parking, at a ratio of one space for each dwelling unit, is the most important of these other factors. Although no part of the lot is required by the City Planning Code to be kept free of parking, there is a practical limit as to the number of parking spaces that can be accommodated at the ground level, and more than one level of parking is seldom found. In the case of corner lots, the automobiles are drawn in across a continuous curb cut along the street, and in the case of interior lots the most common arrangement is three cars abreast across the 25-foot width of the rear yard, with the remaining cars placed near one side of the lot under the building. The one blocked parking space permitted by the City Planning Code is used wherever such a space makes it possible to reach a higher density, whether or not good judgment indicates that this blocked space will be truly usable to the tenants. In nearly all cases every vehicle must be backed from its parking space into the street. The frequency of curb cuts for driveways usually leaves only one curb parking space, or none at all, for guests of the residents.

On a flat R-3 lot with the common dimensions of 25 feet by 100 feet (2500 square feet in area), six cars can be accommodated if the entire rear yard is used for parking, and the maximum permitted density can be reached. Regularly-shaped corner lots also allow easier design of parking, but irregularly-shaped and sloping lots can present a greater challenge in parking layout, and the maximum density may be impractical.

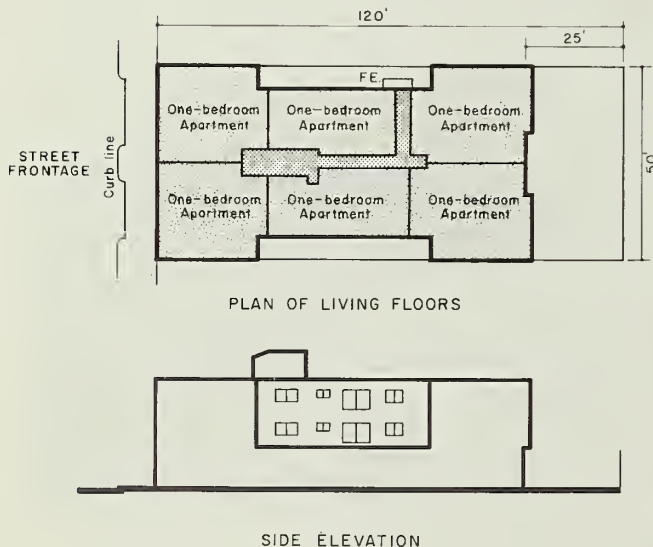


Typical parking layouts under existing standards.



It is also possible that density will be limited by a decision to build only two floors of apartments over the parking level rather than three, a decision that can avoid extra costs for required fireproofing and fire exit facilities, and also avoid less-popular third floor walkup units or elevator costs. But even with only two floors of apartments, it is still possible to reach the maximum allowable density if the units are small. Six units can be built in two levels on a 2500 square foot lot, for instance, although this requires that one unit on each floor be located in the middle of the building with windows facing only a small "light court", which under the Housing Code can be as small as five feet in its least dimension. On interior lots with no side yards, such light court units are common at the R-3 density, and these units are seriously inadequate for occupants of any age group or family composition.

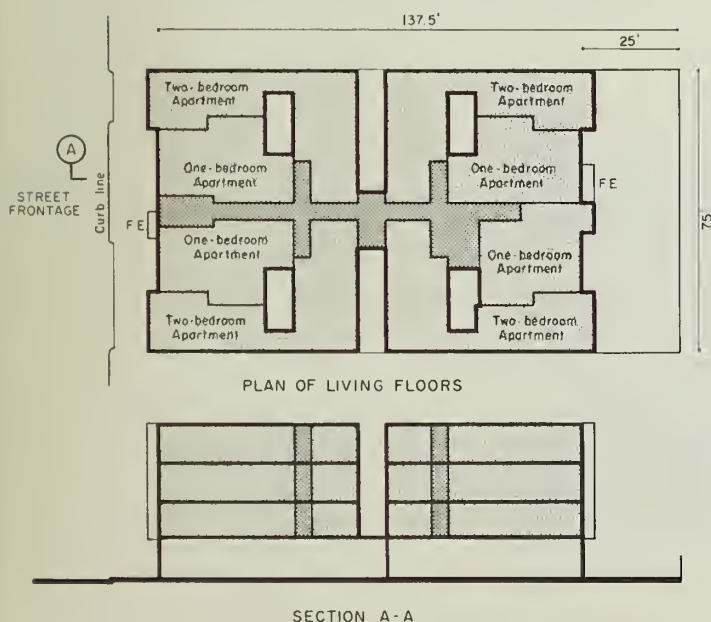
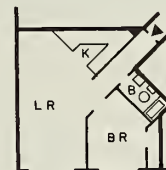
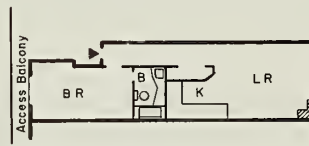
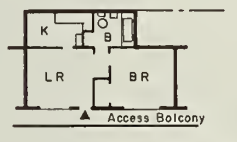
A building with four units facing only on narrow light courts.



The size of R-3 units built for rental almost never exceeds one or two bedrooms. Floor areas are often as little as 500 square feet (20 feet by 25 feet) for a one-bedroom apartment and 750 square feet (30 feet by 25 feet) for a two-bedroom apartment. One-bedroom units are considerably more common than two-bedroom units. Rents generally range from \$130 to \$175 per month for one bedroom and from \$160 to \$225 for two bedrooms. Under these conditions, occupancy is usually limited, either by practicalities or by terms of the lease, to single persons or couples without children.

Despite the smallness of the individual dwelling units, R-3 buildings at the permitted density attain considerable bulk, and, with the exception of buildings on very deep lots or steep slopes, they usually come close to the maximum permitted lot coverage of 70 per cent (75 per cent for corner lots). In most cases the front wall is brought to the front property line and overhangs are projected over the sidewalk and the rear yard. These overhangs are not subject to the coverage limitations of the City Planning Code.

Floor plans of typical small dwelling units.



Examples of buildings reaching the extreme size limits now permitted.

In terms of materials and methods of construction, the shell of the building is adequate but rarely imaginative. Maximum use is made of stock materials such as pre-cut lumber, painted stucco finish, pre-fabricated metal window assemblies and standard fire escapes.

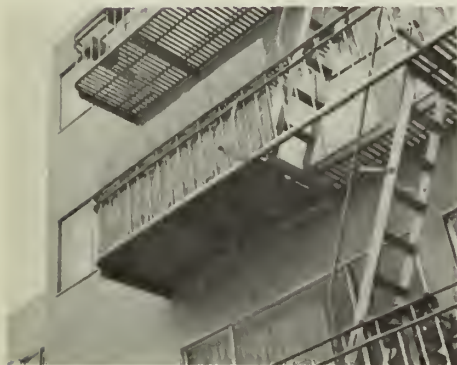
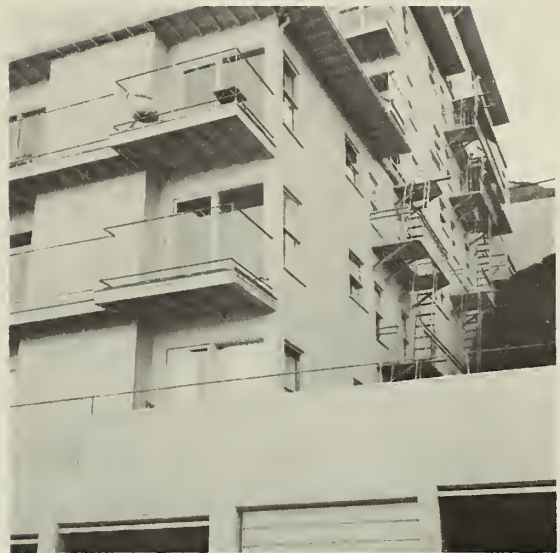
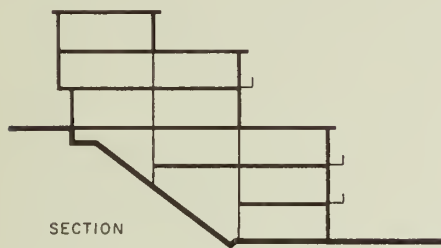
Interior arrangements of rooms, hallways and exitways follow regular patterns. They are affected very little by the City Planning Code, and builders look rather to the most advantageous building practices and the requirements of other City Codes, such as the ground floor fire passage from front to back prescribed by the Building Code, and the minimal room sizes and window areas found necessary for health and safety by the Housing Code.

Many aspects of livability are neglected in R-3 buildings. Stock building plans are imposed upon lots of similar size without consideration for special site factors such as slope and view. A simple need such as storage space is not met because all available space within the apartments must be used to bring the rooms up to the minimal sizes required by other Codes, and basement storage space is cut down by the large area devoted to parking. Sound-proofing is usually inadequate. More attention is apt to be given to all-electric kitchens and similar "gadgets" than to items that will give the building long-lasting qualities. Above all, there is little provision for usable outdoor space, whether it be at ground level, on decks, or on balconies. Rear yards are generally filled with pavement for parking, and landscaping, too, is lacking.

In some ways the present City Planning Code itself, although generally permissive, can discourage provision of some of these amenities. This drawback can be found in its allowance of only cantilevered projections into rear yards (excluding decks), its prohibition on the leveling out of rear yards with wooden decks (whereas retaining walls are allowed), and its setting of a maximum depth of three feet for balconies excluded from lot coverage.

These many results of the Department of City Planning surveys lead to the firm conclusion that the present R-3 standards are wholly inadequate to the needs of San Francisco and should be revised.

Examples of hillside construction on six or more levels.



Narrow balconies and fire escapes used for outdoor living due to lack of other space.

The cumulative effect of new buildings on a single street.



11. The regulations are also unreasonable when compared with regulations of similar purpose in other cities.

A comparison with zoning standards for other cities also has shown that San Francisco's present residential standards are remarkably permissive, particularly in the medium density range. No other city is comparable to San Francisco in all respects, and therefore a study was made of the zoning requirements of all cities with metropolitan areas of more than one million population. There are 19 such cities, and those coming close to San Francisco in current average population density are Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Saint Louis, Washington, Buffalo, and Queens Borough in New York City (Manhattan, with five times the density of the others, is not comparable). Plate 6 shows the results of the study.

For purposes of this report, the key comparison is found in the first district in each city that permits apartments, for it is generally this district that will determine whether the city will have good low-rise apartments of medium density. San Francisco is found to permit a density two and one-half times that of any other city for such a district, and close to five times the average of all the other cities studied. Seven of these other cities do not permit a density as high as the San Francisco R-3 density for any of their residential districts.

Within the Bay Area, a similar study has shown that with the exception of Oakland, Berkeley and Richmond, no other municipality with density control permits a density as high as R-3 anywhere within its borders, and none of the Bay Area cities contemplates as high a density for general low-rise construction.

As a further comparison, the leading authorities on residential planning all recommend far lower low-rise apartment densities than are permitted in R-3. The American Public Health Association, for instance, in its widely used work entitled "Planning the Neighborhood"*, suggests standards of no less than 1500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit for two-story apartments and 1000 square feet for three-story apartments. Although these figures are based not on San Francisco but on nationwide experience, they will have a bearing on what is planned in any city.

* Public Administration Service, 1948, 1960.

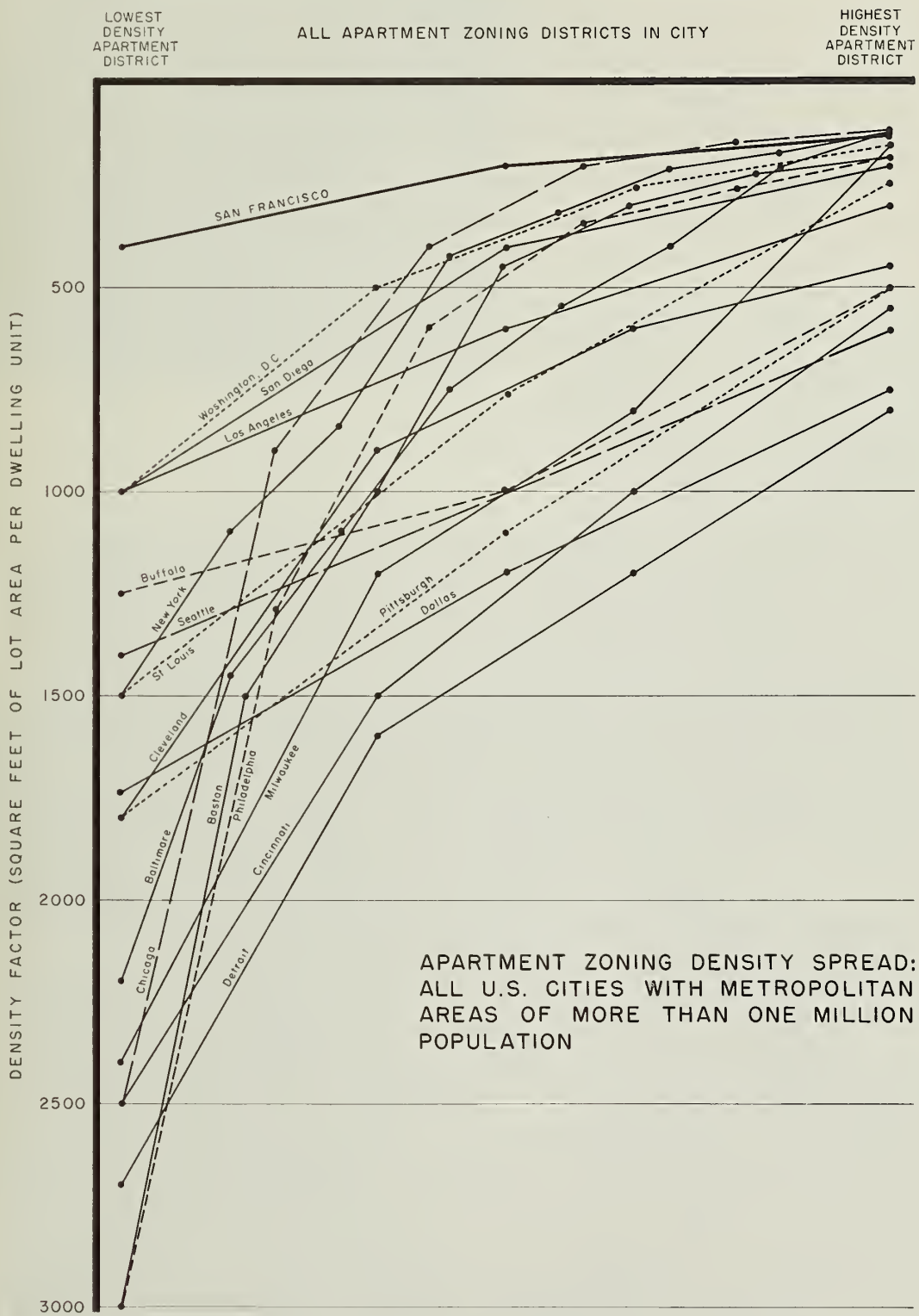


PLATE 6

When matched against other cities, San Francisco is notable for its patterns of narrow lots, high building coverage, and lack of front and side yards. Up to now, San Francisco has achieved attractive residential areas in its own fashion by low buildings hugging the hillsides, planting in every available space, and the predominance of medium density neighborhoods over high density ones. The types of open spaces enjoyed in other cities can, with sufficient planning, be substituted for elsewhere on the lot in San Francisco, but in order to preserve San Francisco's unique residential character the R-3 standards must be improved.





Open spaces in San Francisco:
front setbacks (above, lower right)
entry court (right)
rear yard (below)



TABLE III:

SUMMARY COMPARISON - PRESENT AND PROPOSED REGULATIONS

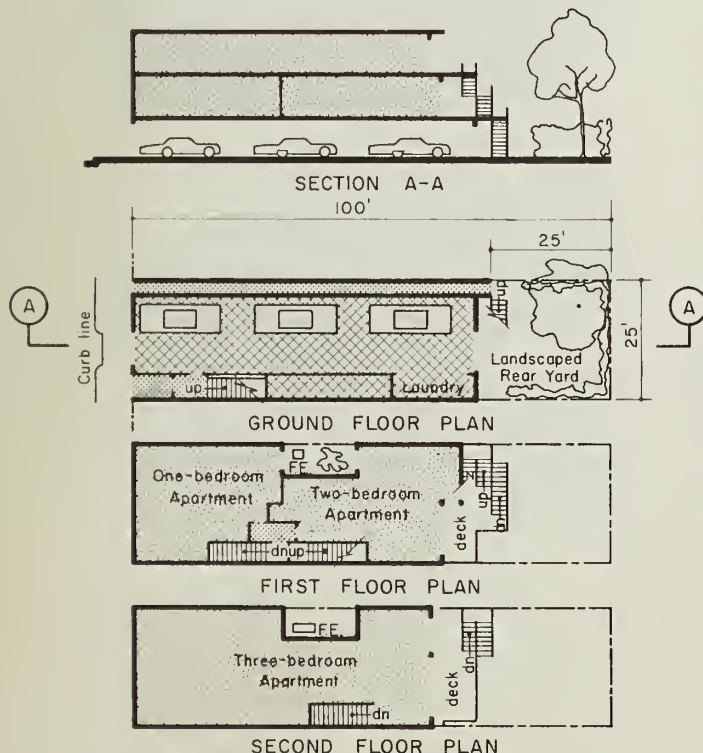
Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	Minimum Lot Area (Density)	Maximum Coverage	Minimum Yards	Maximum Height	Maximum Bulk	Minimum Usable Open Space	Minimum Parking	Exposure of Dwelling Units
R-3 Existing	2640 sq. ft. in new subdivisions; others 2500 sq.ft. except lots of record. Lots within 125' of corner, 1750 sq.ft.	400 sq. ft. per dwelling unit. Group housing: not limited.	Interior lots: 70% Corner lots: 75%	Interior lots: rear yd. 25 ft. Corner lots: rear yd. 15 ft.	40 ft. (dwelling only).	For dwellings, coverage, yard and height limits govern. (No height limit for non-dwelling structures.)	No Requirement	One space per dwelling unit. (Special requirements for other uses.) Tandem space permitted for dwellings.	No Requirement
R-3 Proposed	No Change	800 sq. ft. per dwelling unit. Group housing: 310 sq.ft. per bedroom	Interior lots: 65% Corner lots: 70%	Interior lots: No Change. Corner lots: rear yd. 20 ft.	No Change	For dwellings, No Change. For non-dwelling structures: Floor Area Ratio of 1.8.	200 sq.ft. per dwelling unit (one sq.ft. private open space credited as 1.33 sq.ft. common open space). 75 sq. ft. per bedroom for group housing.	No Change in number of spaces required. No tandem space permitted. Parking in rear yards prohibited in most cases.	One principal room of each dwelling unit to face on rear yard, street or equivalent open space.
R-3.5 Proposed	Same as R-3 Proposed.	600 sq. ft. per dwelling unit. Group housing: 220 sq.ft. per bedroom.	Same as R-3 Proposed.	Same as R-3 Proposed.	Same as R-3 Proposed.	Same as R-3 Proposed.	150 sq.ft. per dwelling unit (one sq.ft. private open space credited as 1.33 sq.ft. common open space). 55 sq.ft. per bedroom for group housing.	Same as R-3 Proposed, except for less restriction on parking in rear yards.	Same as R-3 Proposed.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

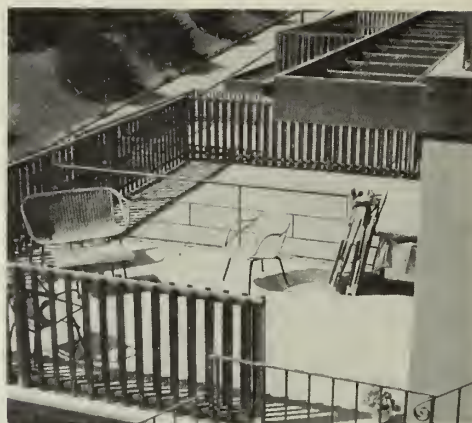
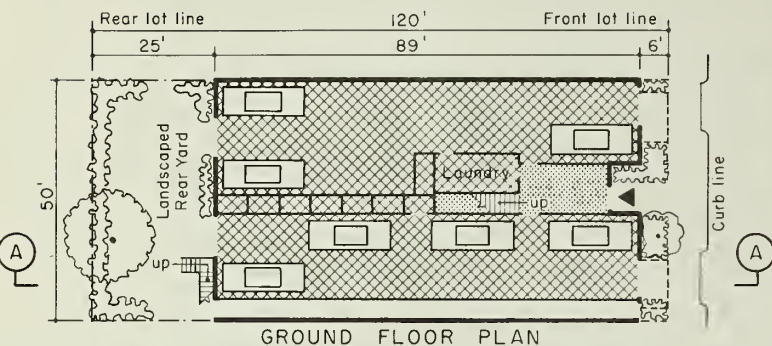
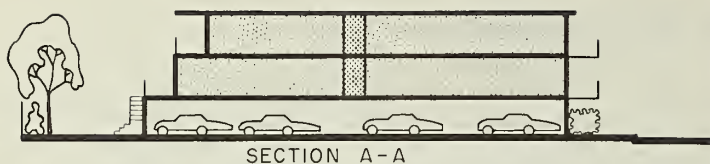
12. To correct the deficiencies in R-3, both revised R-3 standards and an additional medium density district are proposed.

The studies of the Department of City Planning have resulted in specific proposals for revisions in the R-3 standards and for a new intermediate district, R-3.5. The proposed City Planning Code amendments are covered in detail in the description that follows, and their specific text is contained in a separate document supplementing this report.

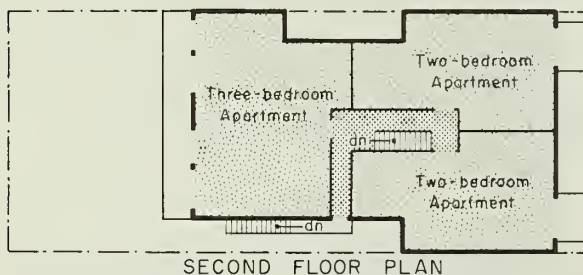
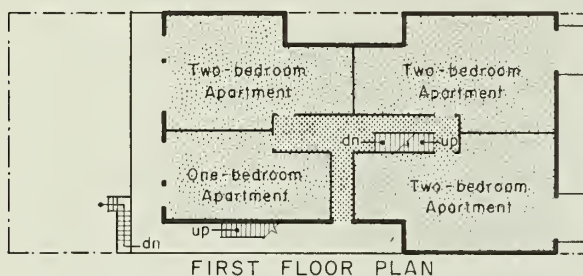
Density. Paramount among the changes proposed is a reduction in the permitted R-3 density, to allow no more than one dwelling unit for each 800 square feet of lot area. The 800 square foot density figure is in accord with the Master Plan and bears an orderly relationship to R-1 and R-2 densities. It fits in well with existing medium density neighborhoods, and would accommodate a gradual increase in housing supply without destroying the existing character of these neighborhoods. The resulting buildings would have three units on average small lots of 2500 square feet and proportionally larger numbers of units on larger lots, with greater room for landscaping and outdoor living areas than under the existing R-3 standards.



The plan shows how reduced density would allow all parking to be under the building, freeing the rear yard for landscaping and outdoor living.



The building layout shown at the left would more than meet the new usable open space requirement with its rear yard, front setback, and decks and balconies.



Open Space. In order to assure that a minimum of such outdoor areas will actually be provided, a widely used zoning requirement for "usable open space" would be added to the City Planning Code for new dwellings in R-3. "Usable open space" is outdoor space available for outdoor living, recreation, household utility functions or landscaping, and it may be designed either for private use by a single dwelling unit or for joint use by two or more dwelling units. Such space may be either on the ground or on a roof, porch, deck or balcony that is at or below the level of the dwelling unit that it serves. The basic recommended requirement is 200 square feet of such space for each dwelling unit, but this requirement would be reduced by one quarter if the space provided is immediately accessible to, and private for, the unit it serves.

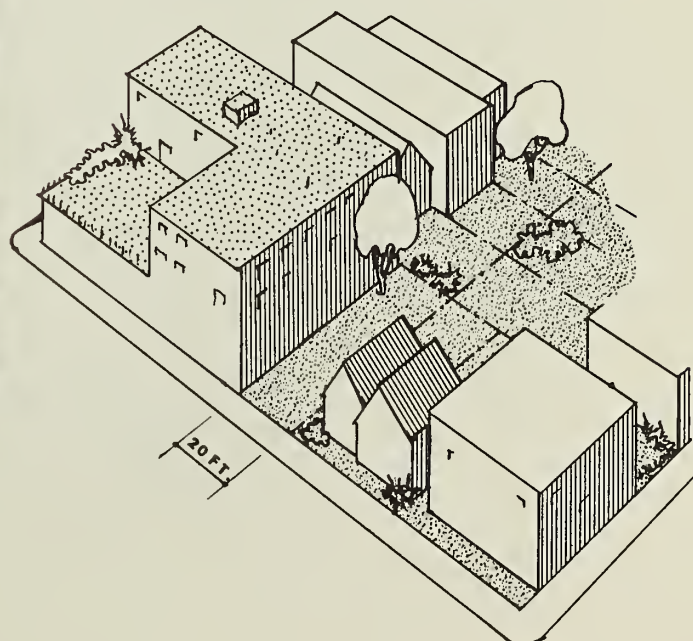
Various refinements in the regulations for usable open space would set limits on dimensions, slope and degree of openness to assure that the space will be truly usable, and would define the building projections and other obstructions that are permitted to encroach upon such space. At the same time, revision and clarification is proposed for the existing provisions of the City Planning Code relating to obstructions that are permitted under the lot coverage and rear yard requirements, in order to eliminate unnecessary distinctions and to allow more opportunities for usable open space on balconies and decks.

In line with usable open space provisions and the reduced dwelling unit density, it is recommended that maximum lot coverage be reduced by five per cent (to 65 per cent for interior lots and 70 per cent for corner lots), and that the minimum rear yard for corner lots be increased from 15 to 20 feet. With these changes, adequate area at the rear of the lot would be available to meet the usable open space requirement in most cases. For sharply sloping lots, it is likely that required usable open space would be provided on balconies, decks or roofs rather than on the ground.

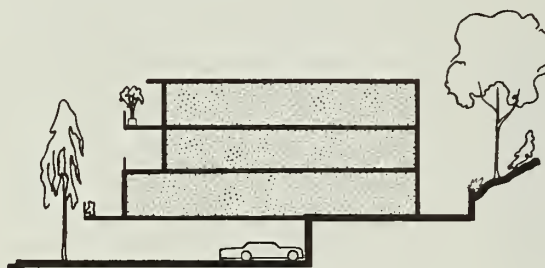


Front setbacks, often found traditionally in R-3 neighborhoods, would be encouraged by the proposed City Planning Code revisions.

A rear yard on corner lots deeper than now required would reduce the bulk of corner buildings and provide needed open space.

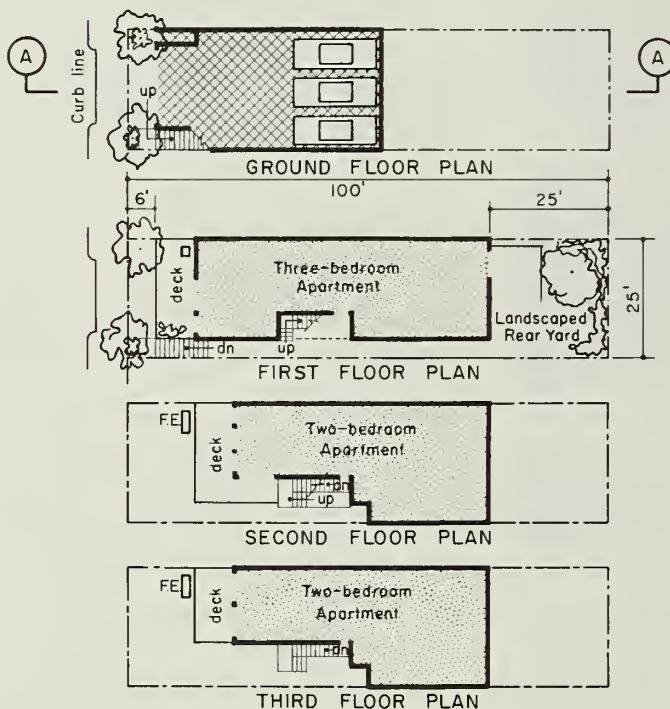


Parking Areas. To safeguard the usability of required open space, and also to protect neighboring rear yards against the noise, odors, glare and unsightliness of automobiles, the proposed regulations provide that the required rear yard for newly-constructed buildings shall be kept free in most cases of parking spaces or driveways. Again, as is true of the usable open space requirement, this standard is tied in with the lowering of allowable dwelling unit density, which would reduce the number of automobiles on the lot. Where exceptions are made for certain special cases, any parking in the required rear yard must be screened from adjacent properties. An additional revision concerning parking would provide that no required parking space may be so arranged that it is blocked by another parking space.



SECTION A-A

One possible treatment of a hillside lot under the proposed standards.

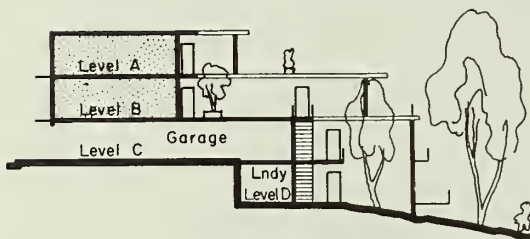




Exposure of Dwelling Units. The last major new R-3 standard concerns the exposure of dwelling units, and would require that at least one of the principal rooms in each dwelling unit must face on a substantial open area, usually at least 25 feet in each dimension. Failure to face one of the rooms of a dwelling unit on an open area of these minimum dimensions denies proper light, sun, air and privacy to the unit and makes it visually and psychologically dismal. Most cities of the United States have recognized this fact and have long since outlawed dwelling units on small light courts. Under the new density standard of 800 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, the facing of whole apartments on small light courts would not be necessary in order to put the permitted number of units on the lot.

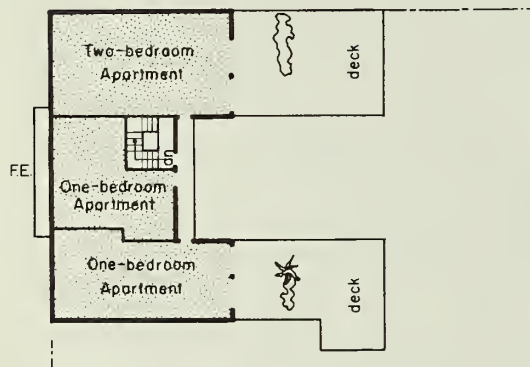
Uses Other than Dwellings. Two other additions to the City Planning Code are proposed in order to fill unintended gaps in the existing R-3 provisions. One would set a maximum building bulk for uses other than dwellings (such as hospitals, schools and rooming houses), which hitherto have been unlimited as to height or total floor area, in contrast to the 40-foot height limit for dwellings. It is recommended that such buildings be subject to a maximum ratio of 1.8 square feet of floor area for each one square foot of lot area.

The other addition concerns the number of rooms in a rooming house or other group housing facility, which also has been unlimited until now. A maximum density would be set by requiring 310 square feet of lot area for each sleeping room, which would allow no more than eight such rooms on an average small lot of 2500 square feet. Usable open space would also be required, at a ratio of 75 square feet per sleeping room.

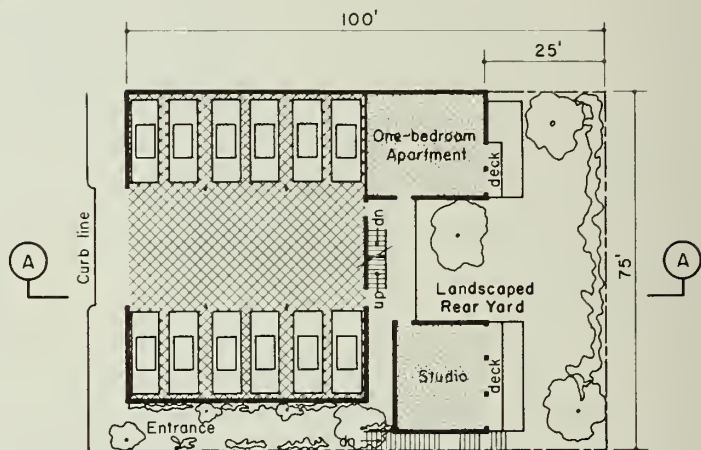


SECTION A-A

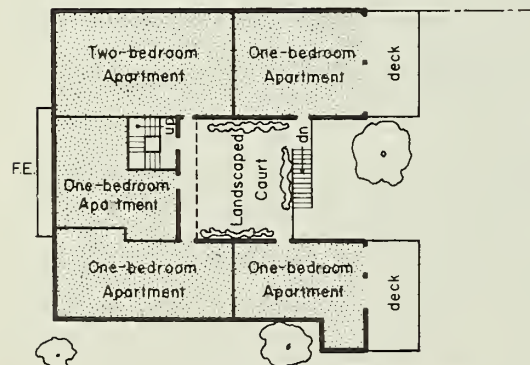
A possible plan for small dwelling units at the R-3.5 density.



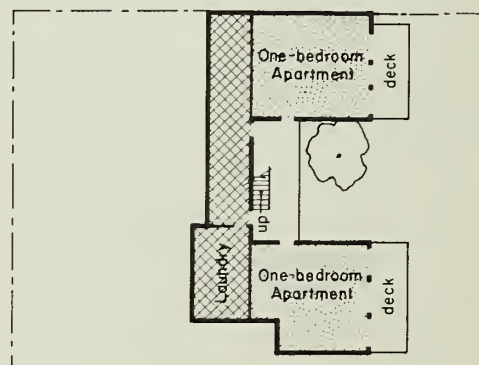
LEVEL A



LEVEL C



LEVEL B



LEVEL D

A New R-3.5 District. It is anticipated that the proposed new R-3 standards would be appropriate for most areas presently zoned R-3. There are, however, a few areas where a somewhat higher density would be suitable. These are areas that are close to the center of the City or to public transit, and substantially built up already at a higher density or located close to large institutions near which considerable numbers of single persons may want or need to live. Examples of the first type are such close-in areas as parts of the Marina and Pacific Heights, and parts of Twin Peaks. Of the second type are the areas around Presbyterian Medical Center, Saint Mary's Hospital, and the University of San Francisco.

At a somewhat higher density, these areas could help to provide small apartments for one- and two-person occupancy in low-rise areas where they may be needed. For this purpose, a new medium density district in addition to R-3 is proposed. The new district would be known as R-3.5 and would have a permitted density of 600 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit. This density is the maximum at which open space and other amenities can be provided on the lot under a low-rise pattern of construction. Because of the smallness of the resulting dwelling units, the new district is not designed primarily for family living. Aside from the change in density, no other modifications of the proposed R-3 standards for dwellings are made for the proposed R-3.5, except that the basic usable open space requirement is reduced to 150 square feet, and an additional allowance is made for parking in the required rear yard. For uses other than dwellings, group housing is allowed at a higher density than in R-3, with 220 square feet of lot area and 55 square feet of usable open space required for each sleeping room, but the 1.8 floor area ratio is carried over because of its consistency with the 40-foot height limit that would continue to apply to dwellings in R-3.5 as well as R-3.

Consideration of definite areas appropriate for reclassification from R-3 to R-3.5 would follow upon adoption of the standards recommended here for the R-3 and R-3.5 Districts, in a manner similar to that used for adoption of the 1960 City Planning Code.

The Problem of Appearance. In this report on R-3 standards, mention should be made of the very important matter of appearance. Much of the objection to R-3 buildings has been articulated in terms of their visual impact, which in turn can have an aesthetic and psychological influence on the neighborhood and an effect on nearby property values. It has been said that the R-3 buildings are generally massive, boxlike, displeasing in their proportions, and marred by ugly garage openings and projections over the street. As more new buildings are constructed along a block frontage, these faults are multiplied and the whole block becomes a sterile mass of unrelated straight lines. The variety, the richness of detail, and the tasteful landscaping of older buildings are usually lacking in the new buildings. Stock materials give the viewer an unrelieved picture of stucco, rustic siding, and thin metal window frames and fire escapes. The overall impression is one of lack of substance and vulnerability to easy deterioration. There have been a few buildings that are notable exceptions, but this overall description has been the general rule in R-3.

Direct control over appearance is a difficult task for zoning or for any other form of public regulation. No such direct control is proposed here, but definite opportunities would be given for better design. With a reduction in dwelling units, building bulk and automobiles, and an increase in open space, a greater variety of siting solutions would be made possible, and there would be less need to encroach on sidewalk areas or to build three floors of apartments rather than two. Garage openings might be reduced in number somewhat, at least for corner buildings, and rear yards would be free of automobile parking. Space would be left for landscaping at the rear of the building and sometimes at its front. In the final analysis, however, good design must be left to the discretion and good intentions of the architect and builder.

Other Needed City Planning Code Studies. These present R-3 and R-3.5 proposals do not cover all of the changes needed throughout the City Planning Code, as the Department of City Planning would be the first to assert. The R-4 and R-5 Districts need attention, for instance, in connection with dwelling unit density for low-rise apartments and building bulk for high-rise buildings, especially where they are located next to lower density districts. In the same resolution in 1961 in which it instructed its staff to study the R-3 standards, the City Planning Commission asked also for a review of R-2; it has been concluded, however, that the proposed changes in the R-3 standards will relieve R-2 of many of its present difficulties, and no R-2 modifications are recommended at this time.

Some sources have suggested that the R-3 height limit of 40 feet might be raised, in order to allow greater flexibility of design at either the present R-3 density or that which is proposed. But it is felt by the Department of City Planning that the 40-foot height (which is also the limit for wood-frame - - Type 5 - - construction under State and local Building Codes) sets a definite neighborhood character to which property owners and builders have become accustomed, that it should not be the function of R-3 to take over the high-rise function of R-4 and R-5, and that the Planned Unit Development procedure in the City Planning Code makes provision for occasional high-rise buildings in R-3 in appropriate cases. The normal R-3 height limit is therefore kept at 40 feet.

At some future time attention should be given to the bulk provisions for all buildings in Commercial Districts, especially where they border Residential Districts. Usable open space requirements, proposed now for R-3, could be extended with beneficial results to dwellings in other districts. Some of the lot size provisions require re-examination, particularly that which permits reduction of lots to 1750 square feet where they are within 125 feet of a corner. There is also an acute need for general evaluation of parking requirements in all districts, although it is not considered likely that any changes in the parking standards for residential buildings in R-3 and R-3.5 would be found necessary, other than those changes proposed in this report.

Despite the need for attention to these other provisions, it is the belief of the Department of City Planning that the R-3 standards are an independent and immediate problem, and that revision of this portion of the City Planning Code should be accomplished at the earliest possible time.

F. CONCLUSIONS

13. The new standards are expected to provide guides that would assure beneficial future construction in R-3 areas and a variety of advantages for the City as a whole.

It is expected that many definite advantages, some of them direct and some indirect, would flow from these revisions in the R-3 standards. Among these are the following:

1. The R-3 standards would be given a reasonable and meaningful basis, in line with the original concept of R-3 as a medium density district. In particular, the population density standard would be in accord with the Master Plan and well related to a realistic population holding capacity for the City. Zoning would become a better guide for the provision of public facilities such as utilities, schools, parks, streets and transit, and for the formation of other public programs such as neighborhood conservation and urban renewal.

2. Better protection would be provided for the unique character of San Francisco and of its neighborhoods. Room would be allowed for healthy growth, but abrupt increases and contrasts in population density and building bulk in specific areas would be avoided. Serious traffic and parking problems already existing in many neighborhoods would not be aggravated. Opportunity would be given for improvement in the appearance of new buildings. And residents would be given a better guarantee of the future soundness of their neighborhoods.

3. In the housing supply, the importance of good medium density apartments to the future of the City would be acknowledged. Variety in new housing would be encouraged, providing accommodations for families as well as other types of residents, with greater flexibility in the size and arrangement of indoor and outdoor living areas. In some cases, premature demolition of older buildings would be slowed, saving their assets of low density and moderate rent levels. If replacement of an existing building were uneconomic, the new R-3 standards might still permit profitable renovation or conversion by addition of dwelling units.

4. The long-run future of the tax base would be made more secure, with neighborhoods better safeguarded and improved controls added to prevent the spread of costly slums. Greater impetus would be given to construction of long-lasting buildings to be held as continuing investments under more stable market conditions. Investors, builders, buyers and tenants would be given a better yardstick on which to base their respective decisions in the market, and land prices might be established upon a more rational basis. Grave public concern over zoning inadequacies would be removed, reducing the demand for zoning on a case-by-case basis which can endanger builders' investments, throw comprehensive planning into confusion and require repeated and costly public hearings.

In this total picture the builders, who have the most to gain through retention of the old R-3 standards, might be disadvantaged in their immediate operations. But long-term benefits of far greater importance would accrue to all citizens of San Francisco, and failure to improve the R-3 standards at this important juncture would present serious liabilities for decades to come.

